

CENTRE FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES IN SOCIETY AND CULTURE

SUDDEN DEATH CRIME AND PUNISHMENT: THE CASE OF SUICIDE BOMBING

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Comparative Literature
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Public Lecture

**Thursday September 19
6 to 8 p.m.**

*John Molson School of Business
1450 Guy St., MB 14.250*



Bio

David Wills is professor of French and Comparative Literature at Brown University. He is author of a number of books including three studies on the originary technicity of the human—*Prosthesis* (1995), *Dorsality* (2008), *Inanimation* (2016)—and has translated various works by Jacques Derrida. His most recent book is *Killing Times: The Temporal Technology of the Death Penalty* (Fordham University Press, 2019).

*The event is free and open to the public.
No registration is required.*

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Artwork: Mrdjan Bajić, *Angel* (2017/18),
125 x 83 x 70 cm. Bronze, aluminum, stainless steel, sash. Photography courtesy of Vladimir Popović. Reproduced by permission.

Lecture

In the post-Enlightenment western practice of the judicial death penalty, everything turns on the instant: first, it is the means by which capital punishment is distinguished from torture; second, at least in the American context, it allows for the possibility of excluding cruelty in general. In a grotesque, non-judicial mimicry of such an instant the suicide bomber commits his crime and simultaneously puts herself to death, “owning” that moment of bloody destruction to advance this or that political purpose.

My paper will sketch out some of the complexities of the death penalty's appropriation of the instant, and its consequences for mortal time, before concentrating on suicide bombing as its terroristic extreme. Paradoxically, in this extreme case, one finds both a type of “ideal” death penalty, and a way to refocus the very questions of its necessity and its efficacy.